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C O N F I D E N T I A L WARSAW 001137

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/CE, EUR/UMB, EUR/ERA

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [EUN](#) [BO](#) [PL](#)  
SUBJECT: POLAND: KEEP BELARUS SANCTIONS, BUT HOW?

REF: STATE 112644

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR DAN SAINZ FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)  
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11. (C) SUMMARY. The GoP supports a rollover of the current EU sanctions mandate set to expire in March 2010, as well as extending the suspension of travel restrictions against EU officials, which expires on December 15, 2009. However, according to MFA officials, Poland still cannot commit to a "double-rollover" decision to be taken at the November 16-17 EU GAERC meeting; they explained that the MFA was still weighing options in light of the fluid debate of the issue among EU members. Polish NGOs, meanwhile, say that Lukashenka is using more subtle tactics to undermine oppositionists, independent media, and NGOs in Belarus. END SUMMARY.

EXTEND SUSPENSION, KEEP SANCTIONS MANDATE, BUT HOW?  
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12. (C) Poland wants to maintain EU sanctions leverage against Belarus, but MFA officials were reluctant to commit to a "double-rollover" decision to be taken at the EU GAERC meeting in mid-November. Radoslaw Darski and Malgorzata Twardowska of the MFA's Eastern Department told us that MFA staffers were divided on the timing of the rollovers, particularly given the fluidity of the debate among EU members. The MFA, however, is aware of Belarus' stalled reform, a sense reinforced by November 6 press reports on Belarus' refusal to grant a visa to Belsat Director Agnieszka Romaszewska-Guzy, who had been slated to participate in a German-Belarusian Society conference on the EU's Eastern Partnership in Minsk.

POLISH MINORITY STILL BELLWETHER  
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13. (C) The GoP continues to view the treatment of the Polish minority in Belarus as the litmus test for measuring Minsk's progress on human rights issues. Darski and Twardowska said the long-standing impasse over the legal status of the Union of Poles in Belarus (UPB) was the main driver for MFA's support for keeping the Belarusian sanctions mandate in place. The still-unregistered, GoP-backed UPB continues to spar with a Belarusian government-sponsored version of the organization. Our MFA interlocutors complained that the two organizations have been locked in a particularly disruptive battle over control of GoP-funded cultural centers in Belarus that provide Polish language classes and information on Polish history.

LUKASHENKA EMPLOYS MORE SUBTLE TACTICS  
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14. (C) In separate conversations, Polish NGO representatives engaged in democracy promotion in Belarus told us that authorities in Minsk continue to harass oppositionists,

media, and NGOs, but have shifted to more subtle tactics. Monetary fines, bureaucratic stonewalling, and threats of job losses are increasingly replacing beatings and imprisonment. Pawel Kazanecki, Chairman of the East European Democratic Center, attributed the shift not only to EU engagement, but to the regime's success in driving many activists to wage "an ineffective virtual war against the government" over the internet rather than demonstrating in the streets.

WAIT AND SEE

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15. (C) The MFA continues its delicate balancing act, trying to draw Belarus away from Russia's influence while not appearing to sacrifice human rights -- particularly those of the Polish minority -- on the altar of improved relations with Minsk. Recent conversations at the MFA suggest that, for now, the GoP will not push to remove the mandate for EU sanctions against Belarus without concessions from Minsk on the legal status of the UPB.

FEINSTEIN